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Dent

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### The Listener

8-11 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated..... 20 JAN 1932

An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education.

By Charlotte Mason. Dent. 7s. 6d.

The Approach to Religious Education. By Dr. Basil  
Yeaxlee. S.C.M. 2s. 6d.

The educational methods of Miss Charlotte Mason are familiar to the many adherents of the P.N.E.U. They have been tried out in a great variety of schools, with results that are claimed to be revolutionary. In brief, the secret lies in giving children books of good literary quality to read, getting them immediately to reproduce or 'narrate' what they have read, and then testing them again after a longish interval. As a second reading is not allowed, the habit is formed of reading with concentrated attention, and it is believed that this habit is transferred to other pursuits. There can be no doubt that such careful reading is valuable, and that the memory and the power of verbal expression is thus trained along certain specific lines. But, like so many educational reformers, Miss Mason and her disciples exaggerate the importance of the discovery. In education, as in medicine or economics, there is no panacea; yet the votaries of this and other systems follow their particular cults with religious fervour. When one comes to examine the principles of Miss Mason's practice in *An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education*, one finds a curious farrago of dubious psychology and shrewd practical sense; and the reader is constantly irritated by tedious repetition and by the author's passion for putting the whole world right. Much is superficial; e.g., Marx's 1848 Manifesto is completely demolished in two pages. Continuation Schools are discussed as though the 1918 Act were not a dead letter, and Germans are apparently still the Huns of 1915. Whatever the value of the work done in the schools of the P.N.E.U. may be, it must be assessed by actual results; this *Essay* cannot fail to discredit the system in the eyes of thoughtful and unprejudiced readers.

Dr. Yeaxlee's is a book of a totally different type. It embodies a course of lectures given at Birmingham University to day school and Sunday school teachers; and it will be of real value to such teachers in other places. Dr. Yeaxlee writes simply and lucidly; in such a course he naturally made no attempt at profundity, but he introduced much material from biology and psychology that was probably new to his audience. As a sensible and straightforward approach to this difficult problem the book is to be recommended.



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## The Listener

8-11 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated

3 - FEB 1932  
193

### Towards a Philosophy of Education

Will you allow me to call attention to one or two points in which your reviewer of Miss Mason's book seems to have missed the author's point of view? It is perfectly true to say that in education, as in medicine or in economics, there is no panacea, but it is not usual for a reviewer to condemn as 'a curious farrago of dubious psychology' a psychology with which he has himself no sympathy, and of which perhaps he has not very much understanding.

May I say that your reviewer makes a mistake in thinking that Miss Mason's educational method consists in reading and narration? That is a superficial and popular idea, and as regards this idea her method is in no sense a discovery. Moreover, reading and narration is, if one may say so, as old as the hills. Miss Mason only made use of it in what we may claim as her discovery, that is, that the mind is as hungry for food as the body, that the food must be good, must be literary, and must be very varied. Again, to those who know Miss Mason's work, the repetition is not tiresome, because it deals with her method in conjunction

with education in many relations—home schoolrooms, private secondary schools, and elementary schools.

It is possible that your reviewer does not know that the *Essay* was published posthumously, and that the trustees thought it better to issue Miss Mason's work as it stood, as showing the scope of her aims. It is true that the Continuation Schools Act is a dead letter, but various educational authorities are seeking for a means to bring education to the young people for whom continuation schools were at first planned, and there is no doubt that in the future provision will be made for the education of young people beyond even the age of continuation schools. May I also say that it is not possible to judge a book that is republished in 1931 as if it were a book that is first published in 1931, when the author has been dead for some eight years?

The last sentence of the review is hardly consistent. We quite agree with the reviewer in saying that the value of the work done in the P.N.E.U. schools must be assessed by actual results, but as the work done in these schools is founded upon the five volumes of the 'Home Education' Series (published at intervals from 1886 to set forth Miss Mason's theory and practice) the *Essay* can hardly be said to discredit a system of which it is the historical summary.

Ambleside

E. RITCHING  
Editor, *Parents' Review*



*Dent*

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### *Liverpool Post and Mercury*

46-50 Victoria Street, Liverpool.

Cutting from issue dated.....

20 JAN 1932

A welcome new edition of Miss Charlotte M. Mason's last and, in some respects, most important work, "An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education" (7s 6d), first published in 1925, has been issued by Dent.



120p4CMC421

Dent

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## Everyman

89 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

28 JAN 1932 103

Cutting from issue dated.....

**T**OWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION, by Charlotte M. Mason (Dent, 7s. 6d.), sets forth the ideals and methods of the Parents' National Education Union. Many years ago Miss Mason founded a school at Ambleside, and her ideas have since been accepted all over the world. She believes that children revel in learning, and that the young mind should be fed with many ideas and left to select those that appeal to it. This book shows the practical results of the P.N.E.U. system, and proves that the education it provides can be a joyous adventure.



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**Oxford Mail**

12 New Inn Hall Street, Oxford.

Cutting from issue dated.....11 JAN 1932.....193

*World of Books***A Philosophy of Education**

"An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education."  
By Charlotte M. Mason. (Dent.) 7s. 6d.

Miss Mason, the originator of the Parents' National Education Union, has put before us very comprehensively in this book the philosophy on which that system is based.

The layman to-day may feel that there are too many voices crying in the wilderness of education; but here at any rate is one who speaks with authority. Parents and teachers and all interested in the upbringing of children would do well to listen.

Miss Mason shows that any true educational system must be based on the fact that it is as natural for the child to learn as it is to eat; and she convinces us that the intellectual apathy so common during adolescence (the great difficulty of all secondary teachers) is not inevitable.

Education, she insists, must be self-education, and the prime necessity is contact of mind with mind. Her theory is throughout enriched and enlightened by a wide personal experience and the judgments of great thinkers.

It is good to see that in her chapters devoted to Applied Theory she faces the most urgent problem of democratic education—that we must be taught to recognise true goodness, how to distinguish between the noble and the ignoble in our leaders and our fellows.

C.D.L.



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## Great Thoughts

46 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

Cutting from issue dated.....193

FEBRUARY 1932

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF  
EDUCATION. By Charlotte M. Mason. (J. M.  
Dent & Sons, 7s. 6d.)

Founder of the Parents' National Education Union many years ago, Miss Mason has very definite ideas on the subject of education, which she published in 1925. The book is now reissued, and is a valuable exposition of the principles to be adopted in educating a child both in the Elementary and in the Secondary School. The fundamental idea in Miss Mason's teaching is that children are *persons*, and are therefore moved by the same springs of conduct as their elders. In the nature of things, the unspoken desire of children is for a wide and very varied curriculum. How this should be provided is a useful part of this book.



EXTRACT FROM

i20p7CMC421

*Great Thoughts*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

FEB. 1932

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION. By Charlotte M. Mason. (J. M. Dent & Sons, 7s. 6d.)

Founder of the Parents' National Education Union many years ago, Miss Mason has very definite ideas on the subject of education, which she published in 1925. The book is now reissued, and is a valuable exposition of the principles to be adopted in educating a child both in the Elementary and in the Secondary School. The fundamental idea in Miss Mason's teaching is that children are *persons*, and are therefore moved by the same springs of conduct as their elders. In the nature of things, the unspoken desire of children is for a wide and very varied curriculum. How this should be provided is a useful part of this book.



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**The Church of England Newspaper**

17 Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated.....1.2 FEB 1932 193

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.**

**Reviews by Canon Parkes.**

In his latest work, *The Approach to Religious Education* (Student Christian Movement, 2s. 6d. and 4s.), Dr. Basil Yeaxlee has given us a stimulating and encouraging book. It is true that the task upon which he has launched is ambitious for so small a volume, the task of showing how all the main fields of human knowledge have their contribution to make towards the equipment and enrichment of those who are engaged in religious education. He has handled his theme very ably, and not only shows close contact with all departments of modern thought and knowledge, but very effectively outlines their contribution to the work of religious education. It may be that many of those for whom the book is intended will find it difficult to read, as the understanding of it postulates more than a moderate acquaintance with such subjects as biology, psychology and philosophy. Those who may not find it easy to read the first half of the book will feel amply compensated in the closing chapters which deal with God the Supreme Educator, the Heart of Christian Teaching, and the Vocation and Training of the Teacher. The book will be of great value, if only it serves to show teachers that, so far from being afraid of the discoveries and developments of modern knowledge, "by every addition to our acquaintance with the actual facts concerning humanity and the environment, material and spiritual, common to humanity, we increase our knowledge and quicken our love of God."

An *Essay towards a Philosophy of Education*, Charlotte M. Mason, (J. M. Dent, 7s. 6d.), is a reprint of a book first published in 1925. It is the last volume of a series in which Miss Mason expounds the principles and methods of the system of education known as the Parents' National Education Union. No one will seriously question the aim of the book "a liberal education for all," but there are numbers who will dispute the thesis that this can only be achieved by the system of the P.N.E.U. No cause, however good, is well advocated if its exponents are compelled to scorn others who are attempting to achieve a conceived purpose by other means. This is one of the defects of the book. Miss Mason has little that is good to say of teachers who do not use her methods. Most oral lessons, for instance, are "tally talk" or "rattle." It is apparent that there is much going on, even in our elementary schools, of which Miss Mason is ignorant, that valuable fruit is being produced by other methods than hers.

Unlike Dr. Yeaxlee, who regards the teacher and the teacher's equipment, as all-important, Miss Mason places almost the whole emphasis upon the pupils, and the pupils are so well-equipped naturally to deal with all that is presented without the interference of a teacher, that we are not surprised that Miss Mason is occasionally guilty of an inferiority complex when she compares them. Also, unlike Dr. Yeaxlee, Miss Mason has no sympathy with modern scientific thought, especially in the realm of psychology, and suggests that modern psychological investigation has so far made no contribution to education. She appears to have, therefore, no sympathy with the modern conception of body-mind, and, to the point of weariness, she reiterates an analogy between the feeding of the body and the feeding of the mind in such a way as to compel the conclusion that body and mind are quite separate entities. She definitely says "the educable part of a person is his mind."

Possibly the chief value of the book is its implicit challenge to teachers and educationists whose theory and practice of education have become fixed. The book will be worth the irritation produced in reading it.



EXTRACT FROM  
**SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL,**  
Edinburgh.

20 MAY 1932

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION BY  
Lotte M. Mason. (J. M. Dent & Sons. 7s. 6d.) This reprint  
a study in educational philosophy, first made in 1925, is evidence  
of the appeal made by the writings of Miss Mason and  
of the strength of the Parents' National Education Union. It  
is impossible to sum up in a volume all that the schools of the  
Union stand for, but there is no other book that so adequately  
indicates the aim and describes the methods and accomplishments  
of a movement that has had an increasing influence in  
British educational theory and practice. In an article recently

published, Professor Dewey points out that the New Education is as yet only a protest movement. It is very certain about the weaknesses and shortcomings of the traditional schools, and its exponents have proved their skill in the arts of denunciation and raillery. Unfortunately, the defence of the methods has all too often been left to the practical success of this or that school, and little has been done to state and defend the underlying philosophy. This leaves the protagonist of the traditional school an opening for the charge that the new schools depend for their success not on methods that can be widely adopted but on the personality of the teachers, the home training of the children, the nature of the equipment, etc. Miss Mason is certainly critical of the "old" education, but she has a good deal to say about the practical value in ordinary circumstances of the method she defends. In these matters she is and can afford to be dogmatic. In attempting to provide a philosophy of education related to her practice she is on less certain ground, and with a fine and true sense of humility she has called her book "An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education." It is something more than that, but she would not claim that she has revealed the deepest foundations of her practice. The central principle is that the child in his immaturity is not in the nonage of personality; he is a person from birth. She protests strongly against the more favoured view that "by means of a pull here, a push there, a compression elsewhere, a person is at last turned out according to the pattern the educator has in mind." This person has a hunger for knowledge which, according to the author, is simply starved out in the ordinary school. She asserts that modern educational practice is concerned with the development of faculties and neglects the all-important matter of providing food to satisfy the appetite for knowledge. (Is it not truer to the historical fact that our schools are based on the Association rather than the Faculty Psychology?) The method then to adopt is to present a vast amount of material mainly in literary form and to allow the child to work on that without repetitions and revisions. Because of his keen appetite the child will assimilate easily and will be able to tell accurately what he has learned. This "telling" is deemed valuable on the rather doubtful principle that "Whatever a child or grown-up person can tell you, that we may be sure he knows." No one can read the book without admiration for the author and for the work of the P.N.E.U. schools represented here. The diagnosis of the ills of the traditional school is certainly of interest to those who spend their working lives in such an institution.



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## The Friend

19-19a Cursitor Street, E.C.4.

Cutting from issue dated.....1932

TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION.

Charlotte M. Mason. *Dent & Sons.* 7s. 6d.

*"Towards a Philosophy of Education."*

In 360 closely printed pages, the founder of the House of Education at Ambleside, and of the Parents' National Educational Union, sets forth her reasons for the system which in hundreds of English homes has helped parents and governesses to give to children, who must perforce work alone or in twos and threes, the stimulating sense of being part of a larger group, as they follow the P.N.E.U. courses of study, take the exams., and progress from stage to stage.

The book is a judicious blend of theory and practice, yet it leaves one with a little sense of repleteness, one cannot see the wood for the trees.

The adaptation of P.N.E.U. methods to Elementary Schools is described in Book II., chapter 1, which will interest all those who are watching with interest the Gloucester County Scheme as fostered by Mr. Household.



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## New Statesman and Nation

10 Great Queen Street, Kingsway, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated 2 APR 1932 -103

### CHILDREN WE TEACH

The Year Book of Education, 1932. Editor in Chief Lord  
EUSTACE PERCY. EYRE, 12s.

The Children We Teach. By DR. SUSAN ISAACS. University  
of London Press. 2s. 6d.

An Essay Towards A Philosophy of Education. By  
CHARLOTTE M. MASON. Dent. 7s. 6d.

Education of the Backward Child. By D. KENNEDY-  
FRASER. University of London Press. 6s.

Constitution Types in Delinquency. By DR. W. A.  
WALLACE. Nelson Paul. 12s.

It is amusing to reflect that, despite the continuous harking to which our so-called educational system is subjected, hardly anyone bothers to question the major assumptions upon which it is based. The enlightened parents of the day demand that sending their children away from home, exclude even instances of "immaturity," and decide the alleged production of "types"; but they seldom get any farther. Their criticism almost invariably assumes the existence of a coherent national policy, administered by a federation of enlightened and benevolent authorities. In point of fact, there is no policy, and the members of the supposed federation, in so far as they heed each other's existence at all, are occupied in playing pull-devil-pull-baker, and endeavouring to frustrate each other's schemes. The only point upon which they approach unanimity has been in their determination to evade the provisions of the Burnham Scale. The elementary schools, being state-administered, are at the mercy of any whim, whether born at headquarters or in the brain of a village school inspector. Secondary education is incoherent (see the quotation printed below), since it has definite requirements to meet in the shape of examinations; but, examiners often being self-willed persons with beliefs irrelevant to their job, its coherence is hardly to be envied. Preparatory schools have their curriculum forced upon them by public schools, until they club together and protest; public schools fight the universities, and so on, up and down and all around the "system."

Anyone who regards this as more than pardonable exaggeration had better read the Year Book for 1932 issued under the direction of Lord Eustace Percy. The editor's foreword is an extremely candid statement of the general situation. "England," he says, "is obviously engaged at the present time in an effort, more deliberate than is usual with British peoples, to effect what may be called an integration of her whole educational system." The pages which follow, and a cursory inspection of the mass of statistics and information so judiciously presented, will convince even the most optimistic that there is a good deal to be integrated. Lord Eustace Percy writes with such temperance, and is so

clear-sighted, that I am tempted to quote him again and again, but I must content myself with the following:

The English secondary school is a somewhat rigid organism. It has the conservatism of all small self-governing bodies, for self-government is the essence of its tradition, inherited down even to purely municipal schools. It has developed a considerable variety of curriculum during the last thirty years, but it still tends to a certain uniformity of type and aim. It is too dependent on university standards to enjoy any great freedom of evolution. It is in a stage of transition. The old predominance of a single intellectual standard of classical education in all schools has been succeeded by a diversity of standards existing side by side in every school, but these alternative standards have hardly been clearly envisaged or defined.

The facts could not possibly be put better; and no one knowing the genius of the English schoolmaster need fear that a policy of integration can ever be too unworkable.

The Year Book contains information of every possible kind about schools in this country, in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, together with a great deal of information about conditions in America and on the Continent. The individual contributions, while they have plenty of variety, have been well edited and chosen. Especially interesting are the chapters on education in Sweden, by Mr. E. H. C. Cole; in Germany, by Dr. Gertrud Hammer, and on technical education in Russia, by Principal R. Mount-Jones; and it is pleasant to read, in the section on education in Palestine, Mr. Humphrey E. Bowman's account of a system for which he is so largely responsible.

Dr. Susan Isaacs' book is a model of common sense. She begins with an axiom, simple, obvious, and frequently forgotten.

The children themselves are the living end and aim of our teaching. It is their thought, their knowledge, their character and development, which make the purpose of our existence as schools and teachers.

It would be pleasant if these words could be stuck up on a poster, in large letters, in the schoolrooms of that too numerous type of teacher who regards all children as a kind of fodder for teaching. "Going through the mill" has been for too long a synonym for education in this country; and it is to such inspired teachers as Dr. Isaacs that we look for a change. This little book should be in the hands of every teacher and every would-be teacher. It can do nothing but good.

Miss Mason's more unflinching book is less impressive. Of her sincerity and thoroughness there can be no doubt; but, reading the two books side by side, one responds to Dr. Isaacs' practical inclusion for others than to Miss Mason's somewhat self-indulgent worded studies. "There must be subject-matter, but it must be good, more as a distinction, an order of merit." It is a pity Miss Mason offers so many opportunities to the irrelevant; but, once provided, we may wonder if the results attained by certain P.N.E.U. schools of which we have knowledge were due to the fact that the pupils were all too busy being proud of their sole action to attend to the ordinary subjects in the curriculum.

Mr. David Kennedy-Fraser's book is sound and sensible. There is nothing high-falooty about it, and he does not remind us that he is a trained psychologist. He insists upon the high susceptibility of backward children, and the need to segregate them in special classes; and proceeds to give any number of practical examples and hints for dealing with them.

Dr. Wilkerson's elaborate and scholarly treatise may well prove formidable to the general reader, if only for the artistic terminology in which most of it is expressed. While we should all no doubt be grateful to our friend the Schizophrenic-Schizoid-Schizophranic Group that "it is to the great merit of Dr. Wilkerson that he has both statistically and temperamentally characterologically indicated the relations between the psychotic, athletic and dysplastic constitution and the Schizoid personality," our pleasure may be hindered by some degree of uncertainty as to what is all about. However, we can always pass on to the Elongated-Eliminated, where Dr. Wilkerson will help us by an occasional explanation "Acromegia, i.e., an active hypopituitary of the brain, e.g., hands and feet."

If this book is intended only for the specialist in psychology, it is a pity to issue it to the general public. If it is intended for the general public, there can be no defence for the jargon in which it is written. Plenty of able scientists and psychologists have shown us that it is possible to express even extremely new knowledge in terms usually intelligible to the average man. It is true that anyone who considers his Greek will always be able to make out what Dr. Wilkerson is talking about; but some of us do not remember our Greek, and some of us have none to do so.

L. A. G. STONE.